

activated by swinging the anchor line held taut in order to change its angle with respect to a longitudinal axis of the fluke and then to mutually displace the first and second coupling member from a coupling position to a position in which the second coupling member is released or emerges from coupling engagement with the first coupling member, the second coupling member comprising a rigid coupling hook which can be released by means of manipulation of the anchor line, the first coupling member comprising a pin about which the coupling hook engages, the operation means being adapted for having the rigid hook pivot about an axis, which is parallel to and at a distance from the pin, from the coupling position to a release position.

Remarks

Claims 1-31 and claims 36-39 are pending in the application. Claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 14, 21, 23, 24, 27, 28, 30, and 31 have been amended. Claims 32-35 have been deleted. No new matter has been added. Reconsideration of the claims is respectfully requested.


The Examiner has objected to claims 4-31 under 37 CFR 1.75 as being in improper form because a multiple dependent claim cannot depend from another multiple dependent claim. Applicant has amended the claims to remove the multiple dependencies. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the objection be withdrawn. Additionally, the Examiner objected to the phrase "in the displacement mentioned" being offset by dashes. Applicant has amended claim 3

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to remove the identified phrase. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the objection be withdrawn.

The Examiner rejected claim 3 under 35 U.S.C. Section 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. In particular, the phrase "the displacement mentioned" has no antecedent basis. As discussed above, claim 3 has been amended to remove the identified phrase. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 1-3 and 32 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Japan 60-67289. Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection. In Japan 67289, only a portion of the hook pivots about the hinge 3. In fact, the hinge forms a portion of the hook. Thus, to prevent premature "pivoting" of this hook portion, an additional slotted member 4 has been provided in Japan 67289. In contradistinction thereto, Applicant's amended claim 1 is not a two-part hook coupled by a hinge, but rather, is a rigid hook. The rigid hook of claim 1 results in a simpler, and, therefore, less vulnerable structure, and promotes a reliable functioning for a longer period of time. Moreover, claim 1 has been amended to clearly define that the swing direction of the anchor line during decoupling is such that the angle between the longitudinal axis and the anchor line increases and that the pin receiving space of the hook opens in the direction of swing. Thus, where the anchor line is extending in a forward direction (see Figures 1A-D), the hook opens rearward. Alternatively, if the anchor line is a mooring line extending in a rearward direction, the hook opens forward. Japan 67289 does not permit or even contemplate such an arrangement.



Finally, Applicant's invention, as set forth in claim 1, has the pivot axis located at the side of the pin facing away from the fluke. Japan 67289, however, has the hinge 3 located at the same level as the "pin" 7. Accordingly, Applicant requests that the rejection of claim 1 be withdrawn.

Claims 2 and 3 depend from independent claim 1, and, thus, are considered to be patentably distinct over Japan 67289 for at least the reasons discussed above in conjunction with claim 1. Accordingly, Applicant requests that the rejection of claims 2 and 3 be withdrawn.

Claim 32 has been cancelled. Accordingly, the Examiner's rejection is moot. Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection of claim 32 be withdrawn.

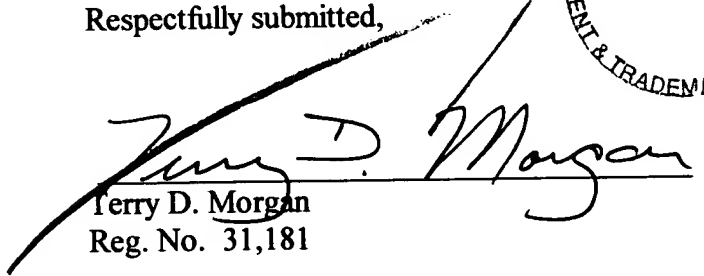
Applicant has added new claims 36-39. At least some of the arguments presented above with respect to claim 1 apply with similar force to the newly added claims. Accordingly, Applicant submits that the claims are in condition for allowance.

The Examiner, in paragraph 5 of the office action, has requested that the references to PCT applications appearing on pages 1, 2, and 10 be amended to refer to the referenced applications by publication number and date. Applicant is in the process of obtaining this information and will provide it to the Examiner in short order in the form of a supplemental amendment as it is uncovered.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney at (713) 934-4050 with any questions, comments or suggestions relating to the referenced patent application.

Respectfully submitted,




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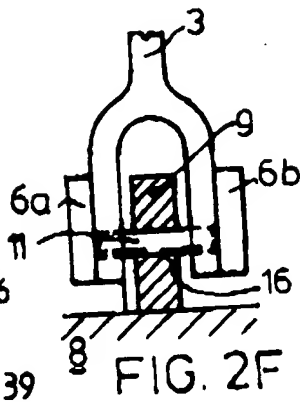
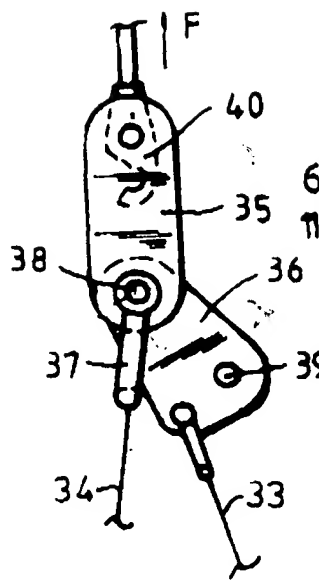
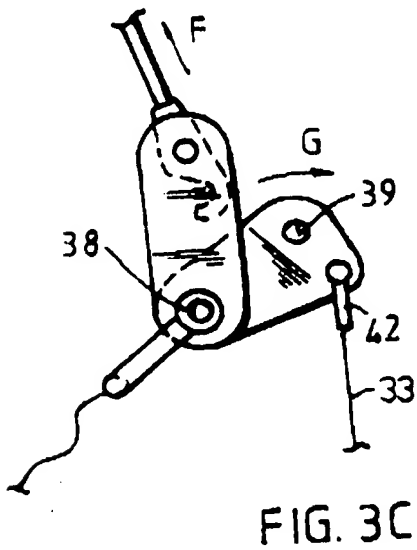
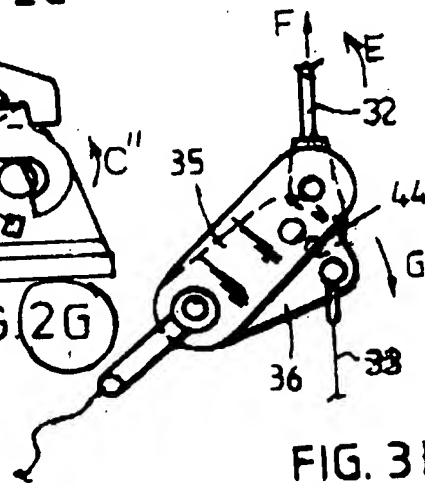
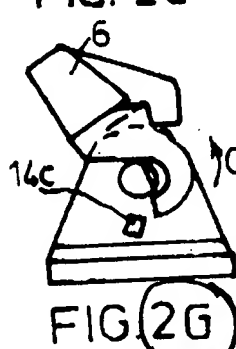
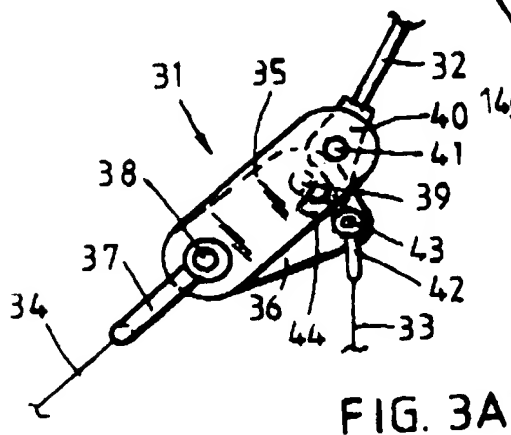
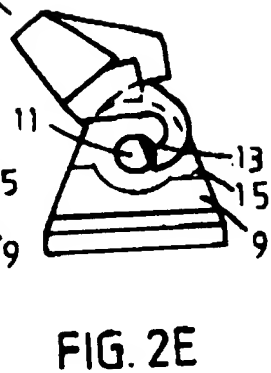
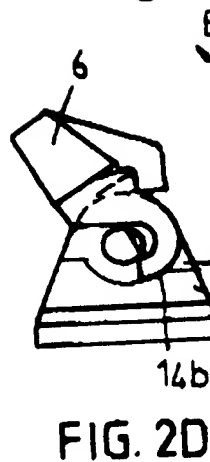
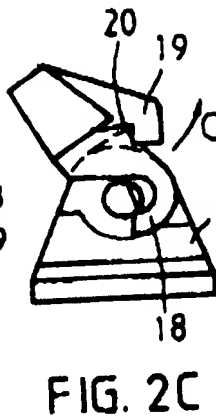
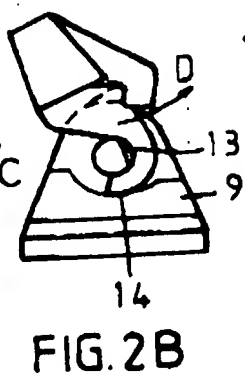
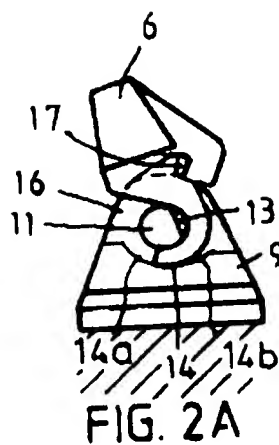
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Date: August 7, 2000

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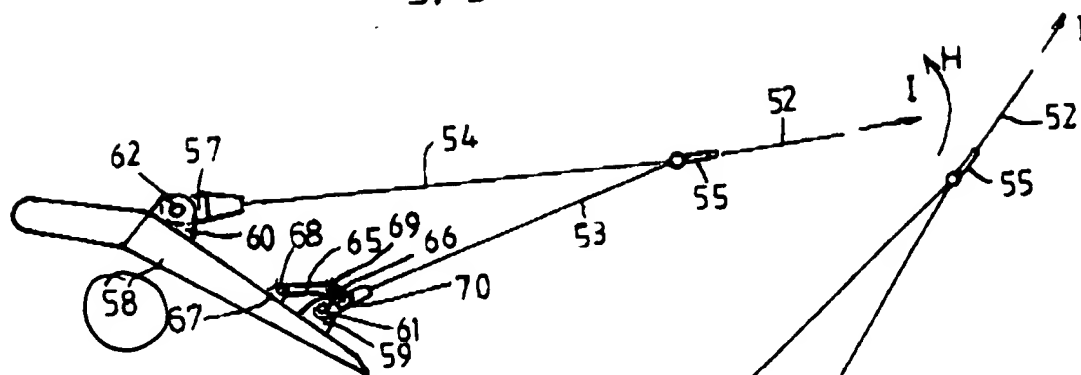


FIG. 4A

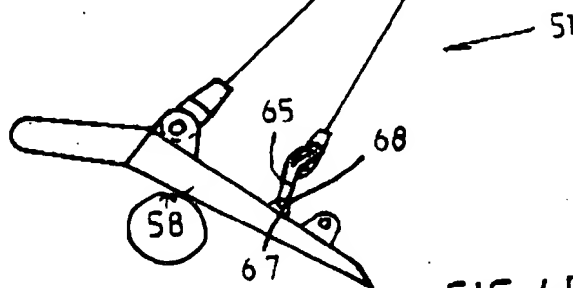


FIG. 4B

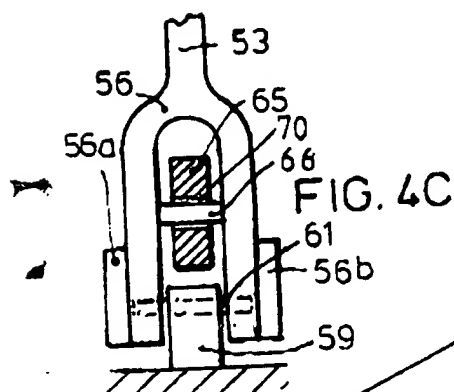


FIG. 4C

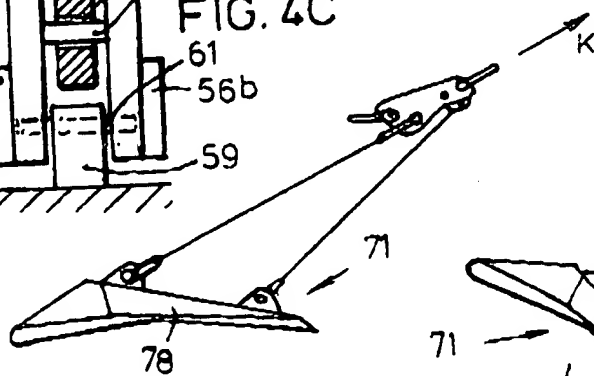


FIG. 5A

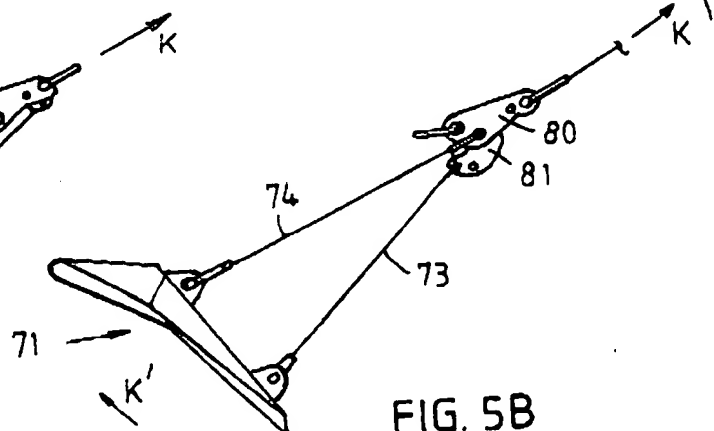


FIG. 5B

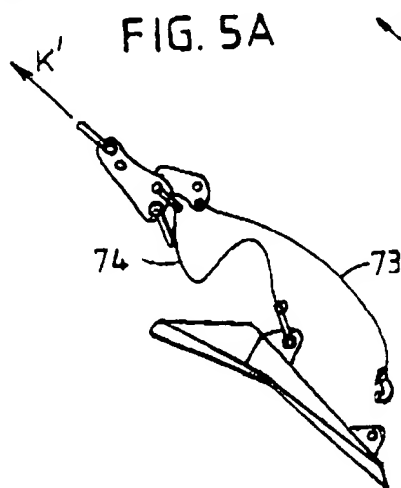


FIG. 5C

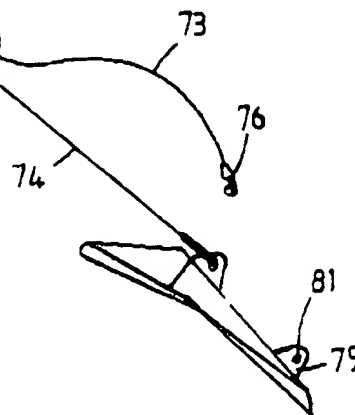


FIG. 5D

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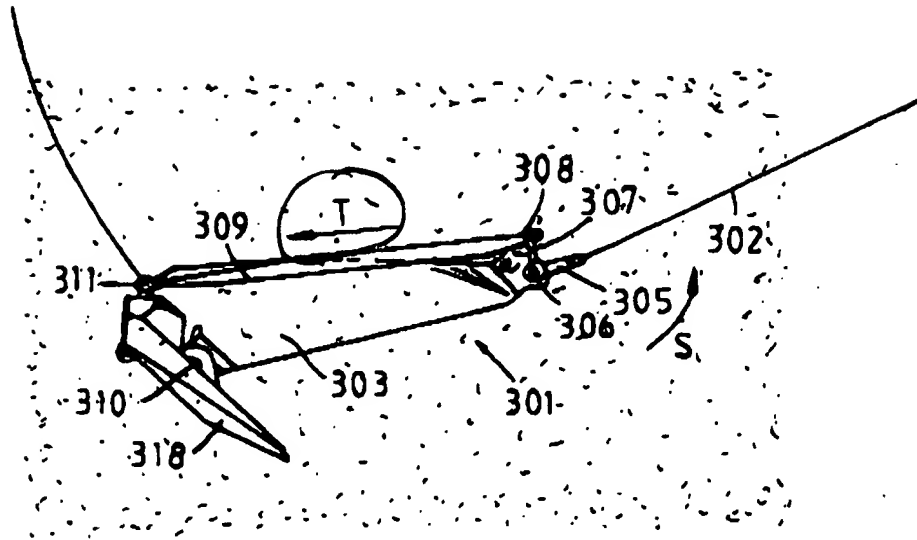


FIG. 8